

**National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594**

Brief of Accident

Adopted 02/14/1996

LAX95FA076 File No. 1245	01/11/1995	FLAGSTAFF, AZ	Aircraft Reg No. N746FE	Time (Local): 18:05 MST		
Make/Model: CESSNA / 208B				Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model: P&W / PT6A-114A			Crew	1	0	0
Aircraft Damage: Destroyed			Pass	0	0	0
Number of Engines: 1						
Operating Certificate(s): Supplemental; On-demand Air Taxi						
Name of Carrier: EMPIRE AIRLINES, INC.						
Type of Flight Operation: Non-scheduled; Domestic; Cargo						
Reg. Flight Conducted Under: Part 135: Air Taxi & Commuter						
Last Depart. Point: Same as Accident/Incident Location				Condition of Light: Night/Dark		
Destination: PHOENIX , AZ				Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility		
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip				Basic Weather: Instrument Conditions		
				Lowest Ceiling: 200 Ft. AGL, Broken		
				Visibility: .75 SM		
				Wind Dir/Speed: 200 / 005 Kts		
				Temperature (°C): 33		
				Obstr to Vision: Fog		
				Precipitation: Snow		
Pilot-in-Command				Flight Time (Hours)		
Age: 59						
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)				Total All Aircraft: 10000		
Airline Transport; Flight Instructor; Multi-engine Land; Multi-engine Sea; Single-engine Land				Last 90 Days: 100		
Instrument Ratings				Total Make/Model: 2000		
Airplane				Total Instrument Time: 800		

A WITNESS LOCATED NEAR THE DEPARTURE END OF THE RUNWAY SAW THE AIRPLANE INITIALLY CLIMB IN A NORMAL MANNER, THEN STAY BELOW THE CLOUDS AND MAKE A SHALLOW BANK 180-DEGREE LEFT TURN AND DESCEND BELOW A TREE LINE. TOWER TAPES REVEALED THAT THE PILOT TWICE TRANSMITTED THAT HE WAS "COMING BACK" TO THE AIRPORT DURING WHICH THE BACKGROUND SOUND OF THE "FUEL SELECTOR OFF" WARNING HORN WAS HEARD. THE PILOT THEN INFORMED THE CONTROLLER "I'VE GOT TO GET BACK", AND NO WARNING HORN WAS HEARD. THE AIRPLANE COLLIDED WITH TREES AND CAME TO REST ABOUT 6,500 FEET SSE OF THE RUNWAY'S END. PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, THE AIRPLANE WAS REFUELED WITH 40 GALS OF JET A (20 GALS PER TANK), WHICH INCREASED THE TOTAL FUEL LOAD TO 148 GALS. THE FLIGHT MANUAL REQUIRED THAT THE FUEL BALANCE BETWEEN THE LEFT AND RIGHT TANKS BE KEPT WITHIN 200 POUNDS, AND SUGGESTED TURNING OFF ONE FUEL SELECTOR TO CORRECT UNBALANCE SITUATIONS. THE CONDITION OF ONE FUEL SELECTOR TURNED OFF WILL CAUSE THE "FUEL SELECTOR OFF" WARNING HORN TO SOUND. EXAM OF THE AIRCRAFT REVEALED NO EVIDENCE OF PREIMPACT FAILURES. PROP BLADE BUTT SIGNATURES INDICATED IT WAS OPERATING IN THE GOVERNING RANGE, AND ENGINE POWER WAS BEING PRODUCED AT IMPACT.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

LAX95FA076

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01/11/1995

FLAGSTAFF, AZ

Aircraft Reg No. N746FE

Time (Local): 18:05 MST

Occurrence #1: MISCELLANEOUS/OTHER

Phase of Operation: TAKEOFF - INITIAL CLIMB

Findings

1. FUEL SYSTEM,SELECTOR/VALVE - SWITCHED OFF
 2. (C) FUEL TANK SELECTOR POSITION - NOT CORRECTED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. WARNING SYSTEM(OTHER) - ACTIVATED
 4. REMEDIAL ACTION - INITIATED - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING - TURN TO LANDING AREA (EMERGENCY)

Findings

5. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - LOW CEILING
6. (F) WEATHER CONDITION - SNOW
7. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT
8. (C) ALTITUDE - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
9. (F) DIVERTED ATTENTION - PILOT IN COMMAND
10. (C) CLEARANCE - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.

The pilot's failure to properly configure the aircraft fuel system prior to takeoff, and his failure maintain an adequate terrain clearance altitude while maneuvering to return to the airport. Factors in the accident were the dark night lighting conditions, low ceilings, restricted visibility conditions, and the pilot's diverted attention which resulted from activation of the airplane's fuel selector warning horn system.